IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of fabricating a holographic mask comprising the steps of:

a) providing an illumination source for generating a coherent illumination beam directed along an axis;

b) providing a non-opaque object mask having substantially planar regions capable of transmitting a portion of said illumination beam as undiffracted reference wavefronts, and having one or more substantially transparent elements for creating overlapping object wavefronts when said illumination beam is incident thereon;

c) disposing said object mask in said illumination beam;

d) providing a holographic recording medium in said illumination beam in line optically with said object mask, wherein said holographic recording medium has a central region;

e) illuminating said object mask with said illumination beam, wherein said illumination beam directed along said axis causes said object mask to allow undiffracted reference wavefronts to pass therethrough, wherein said object mask does not shadow said central region of said holographic recording medium from said undiffracted reference wavefronts, and wherein said illumination beam directed along said axis causes said one or more substantially transparent elements to create object wavefronts which interact with said undiffracted reference wavefronts to create an interference pattern; and

f) recording said interference pattern in at least said central region of said holographic recording medium.

2. (Previously presented) A method of fabricating a holographic mask according to claim 1, wherein said one or more substantially transparent elements are selected from the group of substantially transparent elements consisting of a phase-altering element, a scattering element, a refracting element, and a diffracting element.

3. (Previously presented) A method of fabricating a holographic mask according to claim 1, wherein said step e) involves scanning said illumination beam over said object mask during said recording of said interference pattern.

4. (Cancel)

5. (Previously presented) A method of fabricating a holographic mask according to claim 1, wherein said at least one or more substantially transparent elements comprise an array of substantially transparent elements.

6-19. Cancel

20. (Previously presented) A method of fabricating a holographic mask as in one of claims 2, 7, 12 or 17, wherein said one or more substantially transparent elements are phase-altering elements which are indentations in said object mask.

21. (Withdrawn) A method of fabricating a holographic mask as in one of claims 2, 7, 12 or 17, wherein said one or more said phase-altering elements are islands of transparent material.

22. (Withdrawn) A method of fabricating a holographic mask as in one of claims 2, 7, 12 or 17, wherein said one or more scattering elements are diffusers.

23. (Withdrawn) A method of fabricating a holographic mask as in one of claims 2, 7, 12 or 17, wherein said one or more scattering elements has a preferred directionality.

24. (Withdrawn) A method of fabricating a holographic mask as in one of claims 2, 7, 12 or 17, wherein said one or more refracting elements are lenslets.

25. (Withdrawn) A method of fabricating a holographic mask as in one of claims 2, 7, 12 or 17, wherein said one or more diffracting elements are gratings.

26. (Withdrawn) A method of fabricating a holographic mask as in one of claims 2, 7, 12 or 17 wherein said one or more diffracting elements are holograms.

27-69 (Canceled)

70. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said recording step (f) includes recording said interference pattern in said holographic recording medium without "clipping" or "bottoming out" of the interference pattern.

71. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 70, wherein said recording step (f) includes controlling exposure time, intensity of illumination, and developing procedure to avoid said "clipping" or said "bottoming out."

72. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the step of transferring said recording of said interference pattern to a durable substrate to provide a durable holographic mask.

73. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein in said providing step (b) said non opaque object mask has a semi-transparent layer with an optical density between 0.1 and 5.0.

74. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein in said illuminating step (e) said reference wavefronts and said object wavefronts have a beam intensity ratio between 0.1:1 and 100:1.

75. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said recoding step (f) involves recording said interference pattern in said holographic recording medium so as to create a substantially continuous diffracting region over said holographic recording medium.

76. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said providing a non-opaque mask step (b) comprises the step of photolithgraphically defining regions on a substrate and etching said regions to provide indentations, islands scattering elements, lenslets, or grating elements for providing said substantially transparent elements.

77. (Canceled)

78. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 73, wherein said recording step (f) includes controlling exposure time, intensity of illumination, and developing procedure to avoid said "clipping" or said "bottoming out."

79-80. (Canceled)

81. (Withdrawn) A method as recited in claim 76, wherein said recording step (f) includes controlling exposure time, intensity of illumination, and developing procedure to avoid said "clipping" or said "bottoming out."

82-89. (Canceled)

90. (Previously presented) A method as recited in claim 72, wherein said recording of said interference pattern overlies said durable substrate and wherein said step of transferring said recording of said interference pattern to a durable substrate involves etching said durable substrate as masked by said overlying recording of said interference pattern.

91. (Previously presented) A method of fabricating a holographic mask according to claim 73, wherein said semi-transparent layer is chrome.